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Exhibition schedule

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
October 24, 1979 - January 6, 1980

Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii
July 11 - August 24, 1980

Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California
September 27 - November 23, 1980

Cover:
31 Flavors Invading Japan/French Vanilla IV (detail), 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. © 1979 Masami Teraoka.

MASAMI TERAOKA

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The work of Masami Teraoka exemplifies the diversity, creativity and eccentricity that characterizes much of recent American art. His compositions of delicately delineated figures and subtle washes of color are a complex amalgam of contrasts, contradictions, meanings, symbols and satire. What initially appear to be well-preserved prints from the Edo period are in fact critical and humorous comments on the industrialized and consumerized nations of America and Japan. Teraoka skillfully balances the dichotomy of his Japanese background and his adopted Los Angeles through the use of a *ukiyo-e* style to express contemporary Western attitudes.

Teraoka's beautifully rendered watercolors of samurais, geishas, and Japanese businessmen, as well as himself, complete with calligraphic inscriptions and decorative cartouches, are abundantly rich in both appearance and narrative content. The sixteen watercolors included in this exhibition are selected from works completed over the last six years and present pieces from all the thematic series that have been explored by the artist. The paintings require months to complete and are preceded by as many as one hundred preparatory drawings. Teraoka traces the final work from a refined preliminary drawing that has been placed on a back-lighted table, adding, changing and altering as he works. The drawing is then meticulously finished with even washes of color reminiscent of traditional Japanese watercolor techniques. To further enhance their 19th-century *ukiyo-e* appearance, the works are often encased in black-lacquered frames designed by the artist. Teraoka is an adept parodist who, like the *ukiyo-e* artists who inspired him, reacts to and comments on contemporary society. Masking them in a 19th-century Japanese style, Teraoka ingeniously depicts 20th-century phenomena of environmental pollution, gross consumerism and the infiltration of American business into foreign cultures.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to the artist for his thoughtfulness and cooperation during the preparation of the exhibition and catalogue. In addition to the owners, who have generously lent works for the extended tour of the exhibition, I would also like to express appreciation to Edward Den Lau of Space, Los Angeles, for his continued assistance and consideration. Special gratitude is extended to Howard A. Link, Curator of Asian Art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii, for contributing an essay to the catalogue. His expertise in *ukiyo-e* prints and insightful discussion and interpretation of Teraoka's paintings serve to greatly expand our understanding and enjoyment of the work.

Richard Marshall
Associate Curator, Exhibitions

Figure 1
McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan Flying Fries, 1974.
Watercolor on paper, 20 × 14 inches. Collection of Dr. Ray Mnich, Beverly Hills.

MASAMI TERAOKA

by Howard A. Link

MASAMI TERAOKA is an artist who has revived for this age the over-ripe style of nineteenth-century Japanese *ukiyo-e* artists, drawing upon the fundamentals of that marvelously decadent and erotic art form and applying them in a new and original statement.[1] Unconcerned with the vortex of present day art movements, he has consciously chosen the peripheral perspective and his own roots for inspiration. He remains quite apart from the abstract or realistic trends of today, and ignores the pressures and preoccupations that often mold the full-time artist.

To the casual observer, Teraoka's works look like Japanese woodblock prints, with their perfectly controlled, delicate color gradations. The inclusion of calligraphy in elaborately framed cartouches, and of censorship and publisher seals, all common in nineteenth-century *ukiyo-e* prints, adds to the illusion. Yet the medium and format of Teraoka's works are clearly unrelated to those of the prints. Teraoka's technique is watercolor, not woodblock, and his compositions are not limited to the standard sizes of Edo period *ukiyo-e* prints, but come out of the tradition of long handscroll painting.[2] Unlike handscrolls, however, which were rolled and unrolled from right to left so that only a portion of the handscroll was visible, Teraoka's art is meant to be taken in all at once. The effect is therefore a decorative one, similar to that of Japanese screens. Nevertheless, Teraoka does often retain the Oriental convention of reading from right to left in terms of the development of the narrative and the flow of the composition.

Like *ukiyo-e* print artists of the nineteenth century, Teraoka blends a degree of wisdom with much absurdity in a consciously chosen art style that lends itself to keen wit, nuances of hidden meaning (often erotic and salacious), twists of earthy humor and a great deal of sheer beauty. Teraoka's style, however, is not just a mosaic of superficial borrowings, but rather an ingenious composite of his own heritage, thoughts and experience.

Born in Onomichi, Japan, in 1936, Teraoka was artistically precocious. His father, who had aspired to be a musician in his own youth, recognized early his son's artistic gift and was a guiding force in the development of the boy's career. At the age of seven, young Teraoka began to study watercolor painting under a local artist of some reputation, Moemon Sugihara, who had mastered both Western and traditional Japanese techniques of painting and could

Figure 2
Torii Kiyonaga (1752-1815). *Nihonbashi*, c. 1786.
James A. Michener Collection, Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Figure 3
Ukiyo-e Series No. 1 (Nihonbashi), 1971.
Ink and pencil on paper, 11½ × 11½ inches. Private collection.

produce either style at will.[3] It was from this teacher that Teraoka learned to control his brush, to create a precise and yet fluid line, to layer his watercolor tints in order to achieve extraordinary richness and luminosity and to apply even washes free from the accidental pools of color that often characterize contemporary watercolor technique. Although this training lasted for only two years, Teraoka continued to study independently, perfecting his sensitive skills to a degree that assured him a brilliant future in painting. During these early years he helped in his family's kimono shop where he encountered first-hand the many striking kimono patterns that would later serve as another important source of inspiration for his detailed art.

At Kwansei Gwakuin University in Kobe, Teraoka majored in aesthetics, which brought him into touch with many facets of art, music and literature. Painting necessarily took a secondary place during these formative years, but it was never totally abandoned due to his own instinctive, pervasive talent and his father's continued influence.

In 1961 Teraoka's interest in art took him to Los Angeles, where he first studied at Los Angeles Harbor College and the Art Center School of Design. These were restless, unproductive years for Teraoka, and his art reflected his uncertainty. In 1964, however, he began to study abstract painting seriously at Otis Art Institute. There he gained an even deeper understanding of the allocation of space on a flat surface, and came to grips with the avant-garde styles that made up the artistic milieu of America in the 1960s. He witnessed the emergence of pop art and was influenced in his own acrylic paintings by the flat color shapes of Tom Wesselmann's work.[4] This was also the period when Los Angeles began to see the invasion of Japanese businessmen and investment—a theme that Teraoka would later parody in his satirical art in the 1970s.

Teraoka's mature style had its origin in part in the pop art movement, but its full development began in 1971 when he first combined elements of *ukiyo-e* with his pop art style in the erotic series, *Hollywood Landscape*, done in colored pencil on paper. In the same year, he produced his first important watercolors, in another erotic set, aptly titled *Ukiyo-e Series*.[5] His first sketch for this set is in pen and ink only, but it illustrates his creative method particularly well (fig. 3). In this early drawing he borrowed his composition from Torii Kiyonaga's (1752-1815) superb print diptych, *Nihonbashi* (fig. 2). But instead of the majestic procession of tall statuesque beauties parading in their finery on the bridge, Teraoka has replaced all but one of Kiyonaga's figures with ungainly, nude Western women whose earthy posturing becomes a parody on sex and womanhood. The attenuated proportions of the figures, the facial types and the long wads of hair owe something to the early visions of Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98), who had become a popular source of inspiration in art in the 1960s. Nevertheless, the sensual stance of the women, bordering on the salacious, is very much Teraoka's own. The Beardsley influence can be more clearly observed in Teraoka's superb watercolors from the same series, in which the artist depicted his curious composite creatures—Western women dressed in traditional kimonos—in one erotic episode after another.[6] Sexual imagery and innuendo abound in these works: snake-like tongues devouring ice cream cones (*Ukiyo-e Series No. 13*, 1972); tissue paper (*Ukiyo-e Series No. 21*, 1972); and a huge banana (*Ukiyo-e Series No. 19*, 1972), an especially good example of the Beardsley influence, although the erotic message is different (fig. 4). In one earthy portrait of a woman with Kleenex hanging from her lips (a paper tissue is an erotic convention in *ukiyo-e*), a cartouche is included that illustrates a collection of

Figure 4
Ukiyo-e Series No. 19, 1972.
Watercolor on paper, 14½ × 9½ inches. Private collection.

harigata (a type of dildo used by the wealthier neglected ladies in the Edo period) hanging from hooks like so many delicatessen sausages (*Ukiyo-e Series No. 18*, 1972). Teraoka's preoccupation with masturbation and lesbianism in this and related sets done between 1971 and 1974 stems from a deep-seated concern with the roles of male and female in human sexuality, a subject that was also of great interest to the Japanese from at least the Kamakura period (1185-1333) onward.[7] The ultimate in satire of such human experience—the savagery, joy, bitterness, frenzy and ridiculousness of sex—is vividly portrayed in Teraoka's wild visions.[8] These frank visualizations of human beings caught up in the absurdities of sex are of particular significance to an understanding of Teraoka's more recent work, for much of this earlier eroticism is subtly retained as a secondary message.

By 1973, Teraoka began to move away from explicit sex pictures, and his portraits of women took on a more subtle sensuality. For example, his famous *Woman and Iris* (fig. 6), which opened Teraoka's one-man show at the International Museum of Erotic Art, San Francisco, is far more refined than his earlier efforts. His sophisticated symbolism, which makes a visual analogy between an iris bloom and the sexual part of a woman, reminds one of Georgia O'Keeffe's studies of iris with their aura of psychological and sexual energies.

Teraoka's new success led to an invitation in 1974 to show a selection of his paintings at the Baxter Art Gallery of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. The exhibition, called "In the Japanese Tradition," featured some of Teraoka's finest work, including his new series *McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan*. By 1974 Teraoka had discovered his style, and in one year a flood of marvelous works came from his fluid brush, including the entire *McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan* series which poked fun at fast foods and Japanese adaptability. The *La Brea Tar Pits* and the *Venice Beach* series had their beginnings in 1974 as well. Finally, *Bicycle and Woman* of 1974, while retaining a strong sensual mood, reintroduces the ice cream cone theme that he had used earlier and which would become important in his 1977 series, *31 Flavors Invading Japan*.

An interest in Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints was inevitable for Teraoka. First, he was drawn to the prints' flat two-dimensional qualities and to the unfailing taste and judgment of the spatial relationships in these works. Second, the clean pure line came close to his own natural drawing style and proved to be a source of continuing fascination. Teraoka, after all, is a native Japanese trained in the use of calligraphy, and such training demands both a sense of vibrant line and a feeling for space distribution. For the sensitive graphic artist, this background could only augment and direct his natural gift. Third, obscure iconography and symbolism inherent in *ukiyo-e* offered a ready-made set of conventions for use in his own art. Explanatory inscriptions, a Japanese device that corresponds to comic-book derived pop art conventions, gave him an opportunity to add witty clues and double entendres to heighten the visual puns of the narrative.

Ukiyo-e style became the perfect vehicle for Teraoka's fantasies. Throughout the artist's erotic period (1971-74), his cryptic inscriptions conveyed the same clever earthy humor that distinguished the moods and sentiments of Edo period artists. Stylistically, however, Teraoka's figural type remained closer to that of Beardsley than to that of any *ukiyo-e* master. His preference

for this wild-eyed, sharp-nosed creature continues throughout his extensive *McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan* series, except for a few brief experiments with Kiyonaga's style (noted earlier) and two self-portraits done in the manner of Tōshūsai Sharaku (1794-95).[9]

Aficionados of *ukiyo-e* will perhaps wonder at Teraoka's sudden introduction of still another female type in the so-called decadent figural style of the mid-nineteenth century artist Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864), (fig. 5). He first used this type of courtesan figure with its jutting jaw, elongated nose, misshapen eyes and twisted mouth, in his *Geisha and Tattooed Woman* fantasy of 1975 and has continued to employ it in subsequent works. Even Teraoka's narrative scenes show a preference for the impossibly bent, convoluted figures of Kunisada's men and women, depicted in moments of dramatic contortion. Perhaps the peculiarly excessive charms of the nineteenth-century courtesan offer the exact expression of decadence that Teraoka seeks; the symbol of decadent glamour in Japan of the 1850s is the counterpart of his own vision, translated to America and the 1970s.

The sixteen works of art gathered in this exhibition offer a cross-section of Teraoka's *ukiyo-e*-style creations beginning with his first great success, *McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan/ Flying Fries* of 1974, and closing with the erotically provocative *31 Flavors Invading Japan/ French Vanilla IV* of 1979. In all these works, Teraoka illuminates the worst aspects of American and Japanese cultures as they exist today—a wealth of bittersweet ironies brought into sharp focus by absurd narratives, at once hilarious and filled with both literary and visual barbs. While his content is acrid commentary, his form is beauty; Teraoka's gifts for space disposition, rich colors and dynamic line, are nowhere better displayed. Judgments regarding Masami Teraoka's art may vary greatly. Some may criticize it as frivolous, derivative, trivial, degrading, coarse or banal; *ukiyo-e* itself once received a similar appraisal. Others no doubt will pay homage to his art as exquisite satire, delicate, instinctive work, perfect in color, superb in line and gracious in design.

Many years ago James A. Michener closed his enlightening account of the rise and decline of the traditional art of *ukiyo-e* with these prophetic words: "Art must move in cycles. The old must come back. The new must become the old and die. There must be continuous interchange."[10] These words foreshadow the multi-cultural synthesizer, Masami Teraoka, whose *ukiyo-e*-style paintings, rendered in delicate washes and superbly drafted line, say much about our world today and about very human values that transcend time or place, whether it be 1850s Edo, Japan, or 1970s Southern California.

Teraoka's lusty art is one of social protest. It is an art of ridicule, an art which exposes the follies, weaknesses and wrongs of society. In Teraoka's best work, keen satire produces a love/hate reaction of staggering proportions. Teraoka, the omnipresent viewer of mankind, reminds us that art, like life it reports, has numerous facets.

Figure 5
Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1864). *Yuki* (Snow), c. 1832.
James A. Michener Collection, Honolulu Academy of Arts.

Notes

[1] *Ukiyo-e* means *ukiyo* picture. *Ukiyo* was originally a Buddhist term meaning "this wretched world" or "this world of misery" with an emphasis on the transitory nature of human life. The precise meaning of *ukiyo* depended on its compound. For example, *ukiyo-zome* meant a stylish kimono pattern and *ukiyo-nembutsu*, a stylish prayer. On the other hand, *ukiyo-gokoro* referred to a profligate or sordid nature, *ukiyo-machi* defined the demi-monde, *ukiyo-otoko* meant a libertine, *ukiyo-onna* a prostitute, *ukiyo-gurui* meant a passion for harlots, *ukiyo-ningyō* a type of indecent doll, and *ukiyo-bikuni* a wandering prostitute dressed as a nun. Yet *ukiyo-banashi* meant merely small talk or mundane conversation. Because of these usages, some critics have held that *ukiyo-e* in an exact sense must be limited to the hedonistic definition of the term that became popular by the 1660s, when even the choice of characters was altered to reflect this change in meaning. Traditionally, erotica was referred to as *higa* (secret picture) or *shunga* (spring picture), but during the Edo period, *ukiyo-e* was often used as a synonym. For example, in the Edo book *Taikan Zakki* (Jottings of Leisure), there are indications that the author, Shirakawa Rakuo (1758-1829), regarded *ukiyo-e* and *higa* as one and the same thing. When the publication of licentious material was banned by the Tokugawa regime, *ukiyo-e* artists began to add a veil of hidden licentious meaning to other subjects including portraits of actors, beautiful women, heroic warriors and even children. This same process occurs in the art of Teraoka in 1974. The term, *ukiyo eishi* (*ukiyo* artist), appears in two books by the nominal founder of the *ukiyo-e* school, Hishikawa Moronobu (c. 1618-94). These books, *Tsukinami no Asobi* and *Ukiyo Tsuzuki E-Zukushi*, dated 1682, referred to Moronobu as an *ukiyo* artist in their prefaces. Moronobu himself, however, declined to use the somewhat negative term preferring in his signature the more refined *Yamato eishi* (Japanese artist) designation.

[2] Edo was the original name of Tokyo. In 1603 the Tokugawa dynasty seized power and established its capital at Edo. The Tokugawa dictatorial regime was noted for its order and prosperity. In 1868 Edo was captured by forces of the young emperor Meiji and renamed Tokyo.

[3] Moemon Sugihara trained Teraoka in basic watercolor techniques while the young student was living in Onomichi. Sugihara is still active in art circles in Fukuyama City.

[4] The influence of Tom Wesselmann can also be observed in some of Teraoka's reclining nudes from his *Hollywood Landscape* series of 1971. His erotic dream shows a nude along with a variety of cranking machines. The machines also appeared in sketches that showed erotic scrolls being mechanically reproduced. Many of these drawings were preliminary studies for sculptures which Teraoka envisioned but which were never realized.

[5] Here Teraoka is equating *ukiyo-e* with erotica.

[6] Teraoka is not attempting to interpret the Western figure as Ichiyusai Kuniyoshi (1797-1861) or Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-92) might have done, although something of Yoshitoshi's mannerisms can be seen in his earliest work from the *McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan* series. Teraoka sees himself as being very much a part of both Japanese and Western cultures, whereas earlier Japanese artists only knew of Westerners from those who visited Japan. Teraoka feels that he knows Americans and Westerners not just as an observer but as one of them—a participant in American culture on an everyday basis. In this respect, he may be the first Japanese artist painting in a pseudo-Japanese manner to occupy such a position culturally. The long-haired women in Teraoka's art are based on friends of the artist or are composites of several friends. They are Westerners, both American and European; several are the same woman. In placing these women within a *ukiyo-e* context, he is attempting to stress the sharp differences in social and sexual philosophies between Japanese and Western women. For Teraoka, the kimono symbolizes Japanese tradition. American women wear a kimono only for its beauty, not for its historic symbolism.

[7] The earliest extant erotic scroll in Japan, *Chigo no Soshi* (catamites scroll), dated 1321 and kept at Sambō-in of Daigo Temple, in Kyoto, would be registered as a Cultural Property by the Japanese government, if it were not for the fact that it deals exclusively with pederasty. During the Edo period many *ukiyo-e* artists designed prints concerned with sexual ambiguity. Torii Kiyonobu's (1664-1729) series on love among kabuki actors is a classic example.

[8] As with most Japanese erotica, there is clear emphasis on the size of the sexual member. This emphasis can be traced back to at least the twelfth century. The earliest erotic scroll recorded is in fact the phallic contest scroll, *Yobutsu Kurake*, ascribed to Abbot Toba Sōjō (1053-1140). The scroll tells the story of an Imperial contest in which most of the more vigorous males displayed their phallic splendors to be measured by judges. Court ladies were permitted to watch all this in concealment and later challenged the winners. A mid-Kamakura version of this scroll is recorded to have once belonged to Tōji, head temple of the Shingon sect in Kyoto, but only much later versions of the scroll survive (for example, one by Tasaki Sōun, 1815-98).

[9] Teraoka's interest in Tōshūsai Sharaku, who worked for only ten months in 1794 and early 1795, was apparently based upon Sharaku's renegade status in the *ukiyo-e* world. Sharaku's portraits of actors proved so startlingly frank in their realism and exaggeration that his work, according to early record, proved decidedly unpopular. Not even the most perfect of faces could escape Sharaku's acid brush. Teraoka attempted to apply Sharaku's exaggerated realism to his own studies.

[10] James A. Michener, *The Floating World*, Random House, New York, 1954, p. 257.

Figure 6
Woman and Iris, 1974.
Watercolor on paper, 23 × 17½ inches.
Collection of the artist.

Figure 7
McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan/Geisha and Tattooed Woman, 1975.

Watercolor on paper, 14¼ × 21½ inches. Collection of the artist.

McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan

This series consists of twelve paintings: *Flying Fries*, 1974; *Takageta and Fries*, 1974; *Chopsticks and Hamburger*, 1974; *Broom and Hamburger*, 1974; *Chōchin-me*, 1974; *Gail*, 1974; *Self-Portrait*, 1974; *Woman in Green Robe*, 1974; *Sharaku Self-Portraits* (diptych), 1974; *Woman with Mirror*, 1974; and *Geisha and Tattooed Woman*, 1975. The exhibition includes the first and last in this group, demonstrating Teraoka's development from a strongly based pop art style to one more closely in sympathy with nineteenth-century *ukiyo-e*.

The framed cartouche of *Flying Fries* (fig. 1) has a small landscape with McDonald's golden arches, along with an inscription which offers the title of the series and its date of execution. The work shows the long-haired female type of Teraoka's earlier erotic pictures dressed in a kimono, with a bag of french fries (à la McDonald's) flying out of her hand. To emphasize this mirth-evoking image, Teraoka has drawn the figure from a low point of view so that nearly her entire form is silhouetted against the sky. The exaggerated perspective adds a touch of almost foreboding strangeness. Teraoka's incisive drawing, in combination with the characterization of this awkward creature on a collision course with Americanization, is brilliant. The figure is partly in Teraoka's Beardsley-influenced manner, but also bears a resemblance to the late art style of Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-92), whose work, done under strong Western influence, symbolizes the disturbed and shifting forces of the Meiji period (1868-1912). The painting is complete with two signature cartouches, reading Teraoka Masami, a pseudo-publisher's mark (actually Teraoka's family crest and the trademark of his parent's kimono shop) and an Edo period censorship seal, reading *Kiwame* (approved).

Geisha and Tattooed Woman (fig. 7) bears the series title in a cartouche. This work develops the collision theme still further. The tattooed woman is a marvel of sensual drawing. Her shoulders and arms are completely covered with nineteenth-century kimono designs including delicate calligraphic verse. She tackles a bowl of Japanese soup noodles, with slurping delight; her tongue twists around the noodles provocatively and her hair hangs in snake-like strands. Teraoka has drawn her in the same Westernized, languid style as the woman in *Flying Fries*, and she is in sharp contrast to the jutting-jawed courtesan in the background borrowed from the Utagawa Kunisada tradition, who grimaces over a hamburger clutched in one hand. The long inscription written in a style reserved for Japanese erotic pictures is actually a dialogue between the two women—a discussion of proper form in the eating of new-style food. The geisha says, "Are you really going to eat that Japanese noodle soup?" The tattooed woman replies, "Yes, I'm starved. I hope you don't mind my slurping." The geisha asks, "How am I supposed to eat *this*? Should I just *bite* into it?"

The erotic overtones in this work are clearly evident in the drawing style and posturing of characters in the scene as well as the style of writing in the inscription. The courtesan is positioned as if she were a voyeur in a classic erotic scene peeping around a sliding door; the signature cartouches could be mistaken for door pulls. She holds a rumpled napkin for her American hamburger in one hand (also an erotic convention). The tattooed creature gives the appearance of being a modernized geisha—a creation of Teraoka's own fertile mind. The implicit suggestion of oral sex leaves little to the imagination.

This surrealistic narrative combines much acerbic wit with penetrating social commentary. The story is shown in a series of scenes. Japanese businessmen decide to purchase the La Brea Tar Pits (those Ice Age asphalt pits, with preserved remains of prehistoric animals and full-scale fiberglass mammoths, next to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art) in order to move them to Japan as an amusement park. Fortunately the Japanese whaling fleet is in need of employment, having slaughtered almost all the whales, and can be used to transport the swamp. In *La Brea Tar Pits and Pleasure Boats* (fig. 9), Teraoka depicts a huge oil slick, complete with buoys and huge plastic statues of mammoths, being hauled in to the island of Iwashijima from Los Angeles. Little figures in a frenzy of activity can be seen dotting the landscape. Here is Teraoka's strongest indictment of the insensitive and materialistic business community which in the late 1960s brought gross pollution to Japan.

The Japanese script illuminates the scene on many levels, heaping acid insult on the money-hungry Japanese who permitted and aided this debasement. As in a traditional scroll the narrative reads from right to left. The month is October, identified by the gourd-shaped cartouche reading *Kaminazuki* (the old way of identifying the tenth month), a time of beauty but of pending change. Next to a farmhouse with traditional thatched roof appear two vertical placards: the larger translates "New Views of Mt. Fuji," while the smaller identifies the scene as "La Brea Tar Pits." A third cartouche identifies the area as Iwashijima, near Teraoka's hometown. Rafts filled with peasants and workers can be seen near the shore. Long ropes lead to huge barges carrying mammoths. The Japanese have succeeded in moving the tar pits from Los Angeles to Japan. Someone in charge says, "*Gokurōsan*," thanking them for their hard work. A woman announces, "Listen everybody, this dumb thing is supposed to make a lot of money." In the bay, boats (inspired by the *Thirty-Six Views of Fuji* series by Katsushika Hokusai, 1760-1849) continue to move the swamp with its giant oil spill closer to shore. A nagging wife argues with her husband, "Hurry and pull that rope." "You shut up," is his provoked reply.

Teraoka leaves nothing to be misunderstood. A cartouche inscription identifies one of the several elephantine hulks, this one standing proudly in a barge, as a mammoth; a second cartouche on the horizon indicates the direction to Los Angeles. On the opposite shore are traditional pleasure boats that symbolize the joy that the Japanese people have taken in communing with nature. A wealth of ironic comments appears on boat banners: "Prosperous fishing," "Great Karma" and "Seeing clearly brings Happiness and Longevity." One of the boats is named *Sue-hiro-maru* which prophetically translates in part "the end expands and becomes prosperous." Other banners read "Big Whale Catch" and "Congratulations" while a third refers to one of Japan's pantheon of protective gods who is destined to impotence because of the increasing pollution. Women and men in boats add a note of levity to the scene. A woman nags, "Please hurry and go," while her male partner (Teraoka himself) reluctantly answers, "Well... let's get out then." A circular inset again depicts Teraoka, the ever-present voyeur of two societies, as an itinerant pedestrian Zen monk known as a *ko-mu-sō*; the characters, written above the image can also be read—"Alone," "Nothingness" and "Thinking" —terms that clearly define Teraoka's Voltaire-like stance in the world.

Figure 8
New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits and Rental Boat (detail), 1975.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of the artist.

The surrealistic narrative continues in Teraoka's *La Brea Tar Pits and Zen Garden* (fig. 10), now in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Here a traditional Zen garden complete with Buddhist temple, bamboo grove, twisted pines and stone lanterns is depicted in co-existence with the bucolic splendor of the tar pits. This scene of ecological travesty includes the omnipresent Teraoka as a Zen priest, a portrait of the president of McDonald's Japan in a round fan-shaped cartouche with the slogan "Everybody! Work hard for my benefit!", and identifications of scenic points including Senkōji mountain and Senkōku temple with its fifty-five step staircase. The most telling and direct ecological statement occurs in a cartouche in the tar pit itself which translates "stinky bubbles."

The splendor of the sludge pools continued to attract Teraoka in *La Brea Tar Pits and Rental Boat* (fig. 8) and his most recent fantasy, *La Brea Tar Pits Amusement Park* (fig. 11). In the former a businessman is on an outing in the company boat, complete with corporate courtesan, and involved in the Japanese pastime of photographing everything in sight. Staring in amazement and awe at the gigantic elephantine creatures, the courtesan asks in Ōsaka dialect, "What the hell is this?" The Edo businessman, his spectacles askew on his startled face, replies, "This must be a wild boar from America."

Figure 9
New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits and Pleasure Boats, 1975. Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of the artist.

Figure 10
New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits and Zen Garden, 1975. Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of Minneapolis Institute of Arts; funds from Mrs. Patrick Butler and Miscellaneous Purchase Fund

In Teraoka's latest addition to the series, the viewer is treated to a Disneyland version of an ecological nightmare, full of the same wit that characterizes the rest of the series. Teraoka has chosen to contain his scene within a large circle, framed with elaborate brocade and set against the churning sea. A huge mammoth sinks into the inky depths of the tar pit, his trunk high in the air, providing an anchor for a circus tightrope. A Kunisada beauty standing on the opposite shore in high *geta* (sandals) holds the other end of the rope between her teeth, her sharp jutting jaw accented by the rope loop. Teraoka himself, dressed in Japanese robes, walks precariously down the tightrope balancing two boxes on his shoulders. A cartouche inscription *Tsunawatari* (circus tightrope) announces the narrative theme. The boxes are marked *to* (east) and *zai* (west); the scene cleverly parodies Teraoka's own cultural balancing act in real life. The struggling beauty with rope held tautly between her teeth, golf clubs on one arm, is perhaps a satirical reference to Japan's liberated woman and carries the inscription *Yūfo Okame* (Brave Woman, Okame). Other signs such as *Kinen* (No Smoking) have been encountered in other works by Teraoka. An island in the middle of the black sludge is tied with a traditional Shinto rope to indicate that a sacred spirit exists in the rock; a sign on the rock reads, *Za Zen ishi* (meditation boulder) to indicate Japan's syncretic religious attitudes (the compatible blending of Buddhist and Shinto beliefs). Throughout this remarkable series, Teraoka delights in poking fun at the Japanese, whether their shortcomings be traditional ones—the inscription reading, "Don't pee in the tar pits," or more universal ones, such as greed.

Figure 11
New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits Amusement Park (detail), 1979.

Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Courtesy of Space, Los Angeles. © 1979 Masami Teraoka.

New Views of Mt. Fuji

Another series of *New Views of Mt. Fuji* takes leave of the tar pit theme and instead focuses on a number of different subjects including the well-known *Sinking Pleasure Boat*, 1976-77, *Waterfall Contemplation I* and *II*, 1977 and 1979, *Whale and Samurai*, 1978, *Falling Samurai*, 1979 and *Ocean Clean-Up*, 1979.

The content of *Sinking Pleasure Boat* (fig. 12) has been compared to Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*, but Teraoka (the sensualist) never lets his subject become grim. Gerard Haggerty (in *Artweek*, March 12, 1977) eloquently describes the work and its meaning: "A group of revelers is crowded into the bow of a floundering ship. Everyone seems either oblivious to their predicament or determined to celebrate to the end. All of the characters are wearing Edo costumes, and the large central figure holds up a fan, as if to conceal his face. A camera and light meter dangle from his neck. The seal on his kimono identifies him as the president of the Chisso corporation, the company which was responsible for the infamous mercury poisoning of Minamata Island.

"One of the geisha photographs the impending disaster, while another, caught *in flagrante*, watches as her partner struggles to retrieve his golf clubs. A nearby ideogram explains 'Golf Craze' and 'Leave Wives Behind.' Oil and Kleenex and Edo artifacts swirl side by side in the turbulent sea. Divine lightning is about to strike this doomed vessel, and even the rope coiled on its deck looks sinister as a snake. The name of the boat leaves little room for doubt: 'Heaven on Earth Sinking.'"

The ideogram mentioned by Mr. Haggerty is an example of Teraoka's literary play on words. The first three characters when pronounced read: *go* (behind), *u* (stay) and *hu* (wife), an obvious reference to the long-standing Japanese custom of leaving the wife at home. Yet the characters can be read phonetically *gorufu* (golf), and when combined with the fourth character of the inscription *kyō* (religion or craze) refer to Japan's current golf craze.

In other inscriptions Teraoka's earthy humor, bordering on salaciousness, provides a hilarious commentary. One of the heroes of the piece, bent over to expose the puckered bare cheeks of his backside, is expelling some gaseous fumes; characters that suggest specific sounds of "breaking wind" are injected: *pū* and *skā*. A woman holding her nose is identified as "smelling woman." For those who regard such comments as tasteless, historical justification for them in Japanese art may be found in the Kamakura period scrolls dealing with a "breaking wind" contest held at the Imperial Court. The subject survives in several famous versions and is part of Japan's humorous legends of medieval court life.

Waterfall Contemplation I (fig. 13) illustrates man's littering and waste. A samurai, about to commit suicide, stares over an abyss for the last time. His sword rests on his ubiquitous golf bag, and signposts announce "No Smoking," "Not Allowed in Garden" and "No Littering." Over the latter, Teraoka has draped the black necktie of the last victim—the ultimate in ironic litter. Kleenexes and condoms float among the rapids and rocks. Condom is spelled phonetically with the characters *kon* (this), *do* (time), *um* (birth)—another twist of Teraoka's humor.

To this theme Teraoka has added an equally powerful *Waterfall Contemplation II* (fig. 16). The cartouche identifying the series, "East and West eat bad smelly stuff," is followed by a circular cartouche with a uniformed airline hostess, her posture indicative of "breaking air." The protagonist, again ready to commit suicide, is identified as *Hōykyū Daimyō* (salaried lord) an obvious reference to Teraoka's identification of the modern businessman with the feudal lord. An inscription reads *Shura Gedatsu*, a Buddhist reference to the ultimate enlightenment, while a Buddhist death tablet can be observed nearby. Other inscriptions identify objects such as a camera or the necktie of the previous man to end his life on the site. The work is incredibly strong, recalling the expressionist art of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) in his waterfall series, or certain heavy atmospheric landscapes by Kunisada or Eisen (1790-1848).

Another interesting example in the *New Views of Mt. Fuji* series is the large vertical watercolor, *Whale and Samurai* (fig. 14). This work is a particularly fascinating study of a huge whale, not unlike Utagawa Kuniyoshi's (1797-1861) famous depictions. Teraoka eulogizes the destruction of the beast at the hands of the Japanese with powerful symbols. The title of the series, placed in a large cartouche, reads "New Series, The Contemporary Suffering World: One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji." The tour-de-force composition features a huge whale hurling itself out of the ocean, upward past cliffs, the tip of its open mouth touching the Buddhist symbol *shura* (escaping from this suffering world). Near the bottom of the picture, virtually dwarfed by the massiveness of the whale, is a samurai with golf clubs on his back, attempting

Figure 12
New Views of Mt. Fuji/Sinking Pleasure Boat (detail), 1976-77.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of Dr. Michael Bléger, Los Angeles.

Figure 13
New Views of Mt. Fuji/Waterfall Contemplation I (detail), 1977.
Watercolor and silkscreen lines on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Private collection.

to toss an anchor into the waves. The figure vividly recalls the Kabuki character Tomonari, and his suicide in the play *O'mono Ura*, and is no doubt an intentional reference. Finally, the symbol for ocean is combined with the character for regret to mean "regretting the ocean"—the final reward of the whale in search of peace.

In *Ocean Clean-Up* (fig. 17) the main theme is man's pollution. Inscriptions announce, "They want to clean up the beach . . . already there is garbage on the beach." A ghost with catfish face holds up a scroll which says, "You guys cleaning up: you are too late. You should have started long ago. You are screwing up nature." Here is Teraoka's view of the well-meaning environmentalist who clings to hope when it is already much too late for half-way measures. An insert shows a box of sushi, a theme he explores in relationship to the ocean's pollution in a new series begun in 1979.

Possibly the most poetic of Teraoka's new Fuji series is based on a superb print showing the moon through the branches of a tree by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858). *Falling Samurai* (fig. 15) carries the inscription "East and West Eat Smelly Stuff," with the subtitle "Today's Japanese Pictures of Everyday Life." The work shows the end of a samurai as he hurls himself from the precipice. Additional messages contained in two cartouches read *sono-shi* (death) and *Bonnō-Gedatsu* (escaping from the material world, including sexual desire). Teraoka conveys death as a moment of quiet beauty and a return to nature. Nothing more is said.

Figure 14
New Views of Mt. Fuji/Whale and Samurai (detail), 1978.
Watercolor on paper, 55 × 11 inches. Collection of the artist.

Figure 15
New Views of Mt. Fuji/Falling Samurai (detail), 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 120 × 6 inches. Collection of the artist. © 1979 Masami Teraoka.

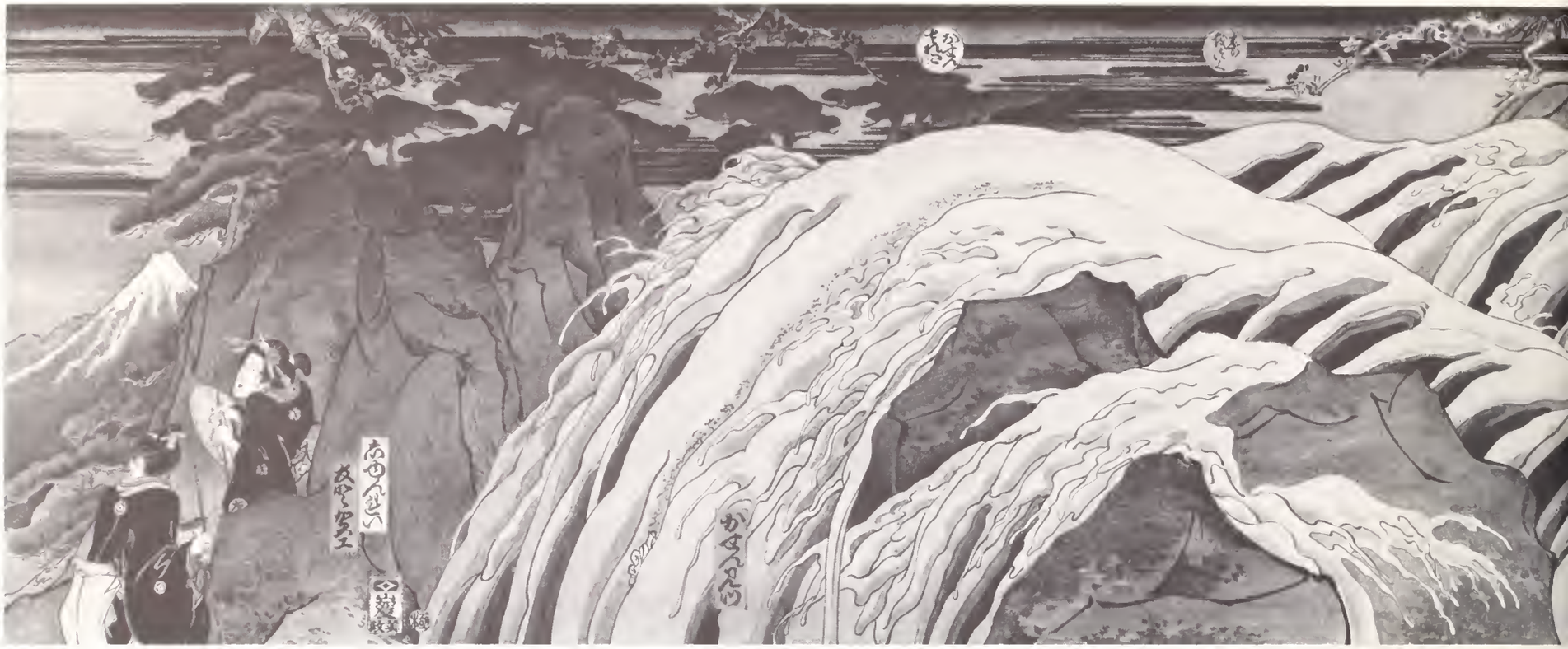


Figure 16
New Views of Mt. Fuji/Waterfall Contemplation II, 1979. Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Courtesy of Space, Los Angeles. © 1979 Masami Teraoka.

Figure 17
New Views of Mt. Fuji/Ocean Clean-Up, 1979. Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of the artist. © 1979 Masami Teraoka.

31 Flavors Invading Japan

Teraoka's major series, *31 Flavors Invading Japan*, includes seven paintings: four versions of *French Vanilla*, dating between 1977 and 1979; *Reflection*, 1977 (fig. 20); *Rocky Road*, 1977; and *Chocolate Chip I*, 1977.

French Vanilla IV (cover) is a particularly provocative composition with erotic overtones similar to *Tattooed Woman and Geisha* of the *McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan* series. A typical Kunisada courtesan, overburdened with hair combs, stares intently at her melting ice cream cone. Teraoka wryly identifies the flavor as vanilla, and labels the cone *dare*, which means "who" or "whose" (the word drip is also pronounced *dare*). The second character *shiru*, which means "to know" and carries an additional meaning of "juice," adds another layer of hidden meaning. The woman's facial expression, something between a laugh and cry, suggests anxiety. Sweat is breaking out on her brow, and she grabs napkins from a dispenser, an additional erotic suggestion. The store is identified on the *noren* (hanging curtain) as Ginza-ya of Edo. A cartouche, near the courtesan, reads "East-West people eat smelly stuff." A second cartouche announces that Venice Beach is located about twenty miles from downtown Los Angeles.

Figure 18
31 Flavors Invading Japan/Chocolate Chip I (detail), 1977.
Watercolor and silkscreen lines on paper, 11 × 55 inches.
Collection of Nancy Noble and Dennis Hudson.

Chocolate Chip I (fig. 18) offers a nearly identical treatment, but with far fewer cryptic references. The cone still carries the erotic pun *dare* ("drip" and "whose") noted above, but an inscription to the far left refers to polluted Mt. Fuji.

As with many of Teraoka's other series, the artist could not resist including his own image in a painting. He appears in *Rocky Road* (fig. 19) as a courtesan, resplendent with heavy hair combs and decadent appearance, a return to the erotic ambiguity of male and female roles used earlier. He also employs again one of his most sensual symbols—the ice cream cone.

Figure 19
31 Flavors Invading Japan/Rocky Road, 1977. Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of the artist.

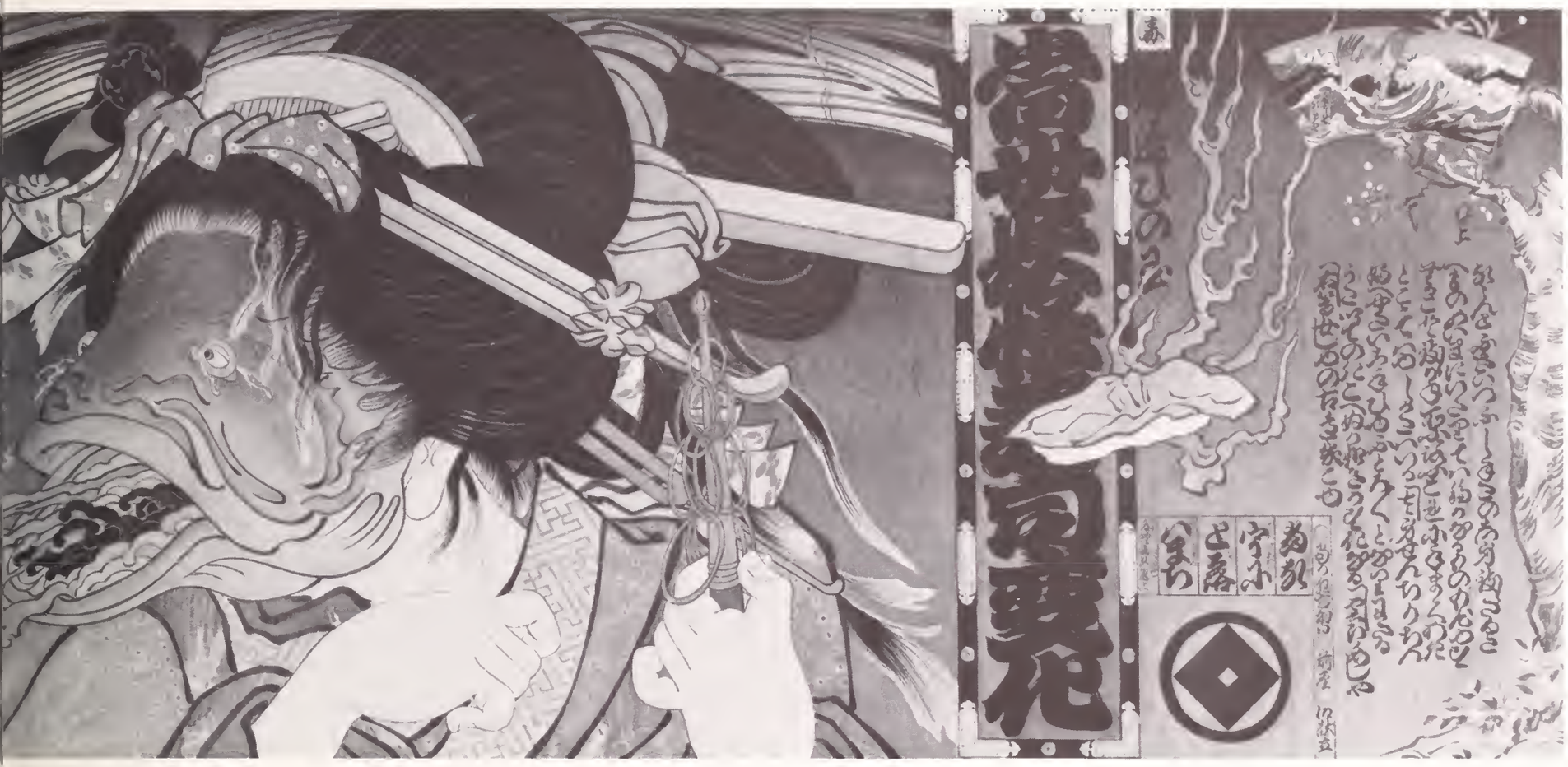
Figure 20
31 Flavors Invading Japan/Reflection, 1977. Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of Rachel Rosenthal, Los Angeles.

Figure 21
Los Angeles Sushi Ghost Tales/Fish Woman and the Artist I, 1979. Watercolor on paper, 13¼ × 55 inches. Collection of the artist. © 1979 Masami Teraoka.

Other Works

Teraoka's quieter creations are also represented in the exhibition. *Santa Monica Pier* (fig. 22) shows one of Teraoka's more tranquil statements on pollution. The artist himself, dressed in samurai robes complete with two swords, his long hair in its usual tangle, is depicted fishing by the light of a crescent moon in a boat off Santa Monica Pier. The calligraphy, predictably, leaves no questions for the viewer to ponder: fishing pole, an old style torch, a bleach bottle and some trash, are all clearly labeled. An erotic touch occurs in a round fan-shaped cartouche: two fireflies are mating.

A new series makes its debut in the exhibition with *Los Angeles Sushi Ghost Tales/Fish Woman and the Artist I* (fig. 21). Polluted fish is the topic of this fantasy. According to Teraoka's narrative drama, anyone who eats polluted raw fish is destined to become a ghost. The setting is the stage of a Nō play; we are made aware of the theatricality of the scene by the explanations of music and narrations, presented as if part of an actual playbill. A ghost appears before Teraoka to warn him of the poisoned sushi he is about to eat. Ghosts in Japan are traditionally depicted as jealous women, but Teraoka has chosen to give his ghostly courtesan, the face of a dead fish, reminiscent of the half-human, half-animal creatures of Utagawa Kuniyoshi. She spews forth the ocean's pollution (including a condom and eerie red



flames). The effect is fascinating, gross and disturbing. Inscriptions add considerable meaning; these include a long synopsis of the story and a description of the sound effects which accompany the scene. The explanation translates, "In the East and West we need to enjoy all kinds of food. But today we cannot feel relaxed about eating properly... the curtain is going up now. Here we go." At this point the *Hayashikata* (the sound-effects men) start to play; the *samisen* (a bańjo-like instrument) goes "chiri-chin" and the flute and drum go "hyū doro doro" (sounds associated with a ghost scene in a traditional play). The cantor's voice can faintly be heard to say, "*Urameshiya*" (I'm very jealous and envious of you).

Next to this narration appears Teraoka's family crest, as if it were a theater trademark, and a list of special offerings: hamachi from Mexico, tuna from Hawaii, sea urchin from Santa Barbara, and octopus from Japan. Any kind of cancer is offered free depending on your choice of polluted delicacy. Teraoka's portrait is identified as the artist at the age of 43, and above, in round fan cartouche, is a young girl, holding an ice cream cone, with a roller skate held to her thigh. An inscription reads, "No point but fat," a reference to the fact that ice cream can be fattening. The overall effect is startling to the viewer, evoking curiosity, repugnance, and at the same time, wonder at the layers of illusion and its sheer beauty of execution.

Figure 22
Santa Monica Pier (detail), 1975.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach; purchased by the Acquisition Council with a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Masami Teraoka

Born in Onomichi, Japan, 1936; moved to Los Angeles, 1961
Studied at Kwansei Gwakuin University, Kobe, Japan (B.A., 1959); Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles (B.A., M.F.A., 1968)
Lives in Los Angeles

Selected One-man Exhibitions

1979 Space, Los Angeles
1977 Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California
Space, Los Angeles
1976 Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota
1975 Space, Los Angeles
1973 David Stuart Gallery, Los Angeles

Selected Group Exhibitions

1979 Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California, *Our Own Art*
1978 The Art Museum and Galleries, California State University, Long Beach, *The Frederick Weisman Company Collection of California Art*
Downey Art Museum, California, *Déjà Vu*
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Art About Art* (traveled to North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles; Portland Art Museum, Oregon)
1977 California State University, Los Angeles, *Miniature*
1976 Art Lending Service, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Los Angeles*
California State University, San Bernardino, *Self-Portrait, Self-Reference*
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *L.A. 8: Painting and Sculpture 76*
1975 Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, *Current Concerns—Part II*
Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles, *Impetus—The Creative Process*
Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California, *4 × 8 plus 4 × 4*
1974 Baxter Art Gallery, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, *In the Japanese Tradition*

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Wortz, Melinda. "The 'Cool School.'" *Art News*, Summer 1976.

Works in the Exhibition

McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan/Flying Fries, 1974.
Watercolor on paper, 20 × 14 inches. Collection of Dr. Ray Mnich, Beverly Hills.

McDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan/Geisha and Tattooed Woman, 1975.
Watercolor on paper, 14¼ × 21½ inches. Collection of the artist.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits and Pleasure Boats, 1975.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of the artist.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits and Rental Boat, 1975.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of the artist.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits and Zen Garden, 1975.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of Minneapolis Institute of Arts; funds from Mrs. Patrick Butler and Miscellaneous Purchase Funds.

Santa Monica Pier, 1975.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach; purchased by the Acquisition Council with a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

31 Flavors Invading Japan/Chocolate Chip I, 1977.
Watercolor and silkscreen lines on paper, 11 × 55 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 14 × 58 × 3 inches. Collection of Nancy Noble and Dennis Hudson.

31 Flavors Invading Japan/Reflection, 1977.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Collection of Rachel Rosenthal, Los Angeles.

31 Flavors Invading Japan/Rocky Road, 1977.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 19 × 58 × 13 inches. Collection of the artist.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/Whale and Samurai, 1978.
Watercolor on paper, 55 × 11 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 58 × 14 × 3 inches. Collection of the artist.

Los Angeles Sushi Ghost Tales/Fish Woman and the Artist I, 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 13¼ × 55 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 16 × 58 × 3 inches. Collection of the artist.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/Falling Samurai, 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 120 × 6 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 123 × 9 × 3 inches; lacquered-wood pedestal, 53¼ × 15 × 14½ inches. Collection of the artist.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/La Brea Tar Pits Amusement Park, 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches. Courtesy of Space, Los Angeles.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/Ocean Clean-Up, 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 14 × 58 × 3 inches. Collection of the artist.

New Views of Mt. Fuji/Waterfall Contemplation II, 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 14 × 58 × 3 inches. Courtesy of Space, Los Angeles.

31 Flavors Invading Japan/French Vanilla IV, 1979.
Watercolor on paper, 11 × 55 inches; lacquered-wood frame, 14 × 58 × 3 inches. Collection of the artist.

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